

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing this testimony in support of HB5262: AN ACT REVISING CERTAIN ABSENTEE VOTING ELIGIBILITY STATUTES.

My name is Carol Rizzolo and I am one of the founding members of a coalition of groups representing approximately 15k voters in CT. We have met weekly for the last 2 years working on expanding ballot access to all eligible CT Voters. I want to underscore eligible in that previous sentence. One of the things that our study group has learned is that several of our voting restrictions are indeed, not what was written in our state Constitution. Rather these were added later in statute.

What I particularly like is that HB5262 seeks to bring our state laws in line with the wording of our Constitution. I imagine that Constitutionalists and Originalists among us should be beaming with pride in this simple return to the Original text of our Founders.

HB5262 removes the requirement that myself as the voter must be ill in order to access an Absentee Ballot. I am the primary caretaker for my 99 1/2 yr old Mom. If she is ill or physically unable to care for herself, I would not leave her side regardless of what time or day that might occur. According to our Constitution, I can use an Absentee Ballot because I am caring for her. I am proud to live in a state in which our Founders recognized the importance of taking care of family members as well as the importance of exercising our civic responsibility to cast our vote. Those are family values in my opinion and I do feel a certain pride that they were both grounded in the importance of civic engagement and family. I am too.

HB5262 also accounts for my being out of town during most of the hours of voting on election day. In 2019, my husband and I left our home on election day to go to NYC for a planned cardiac procedure. We left our home around 6:15 AM. We weren't sure if he would be required to stay overnight at the hospital and so, we planned accordingly. We chose to request absentee ballots, recognizing that this was an illegal ballot first because we left after 6 am when the polls opened and second because there was a chance that we would return to our home before 8 pm that evening. We both consider ourselves law abiding citizens, but what else could we do? Fortunately again, the Founders realized that being out of town for the majority of election day was an adequate reason to vote by Absentee Ballot.

I am proud of our Founders. Interestingly I find myself feeling a surprising kinship with these men I never knew. They too understood that family, life, and civic engagement was and is foundational to our Democracy and we must do every thing that we can to insure that all CT voices are heard and represented.

Thank you,

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